THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC RAGTIME

P.O. BOX 8 KING, ONT., CANADA

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SOCIAL NOTES

The June 18 "Bash" was the best yet, and about 65 people turned up at John and Anne Arpin's house for the festivities. As usual, there was no lack of talent, and the three house pianos were in constant use all evening.

This was the first time that all three Ragtime Society recording stars had gathered together under one roof, and Tom Shea, John Arpin and Charlie Rasch set a right smart pace; Bob Seeley, Jack Cuff, Gale Foehner, John Cossar, Bill Chestnut, et al, produced some pretty fantastic ragtime sounds of their own. In the upstairs living room, Dr. Bob Shanahan and his colleagues from Michigan (collectively known as the Detroit Purple Gang) rendered some fine instrumental trad jazz and blues classics.

The definite high point of the evening (or morning) came when the two basement uprights were pushed together and Max Morath and John Arpin sat down to play duets. We venture to say that nothing like that has ever been heard before - but we sure hope it will be heard again, soon. Max played lead in his beautiful, precise style, while John improvised brilliant harmony. The whole performance was professionally recorded on tape; it is now being edited and will be made available shortly to interested members.

The Ragtime Society executive would like to thank all those who attended the June 18 party for making it such a great success. We are particularly grateful that people like Roger and Ellen Hankins of Boston, Mike Schwimmer of Chicago, Dave Lorentz and Ron Beavan of Pennsylvania, and our staunch friends from the Detroit and Buffalo areas could make it. We look forward to seeing you all again next year.

REPRINT CLUB

The last mailout to the Second Chapter of the Reprint Club has been sent, and includes the following numbers:

STORYVILLE SPORT - Thomas W. Shea
THE STOP RAG - C. A. Reccius
BRAINSTORM RAG - Bud Manchester
MINSTREL MAN - J. Russel Robinson
THE 'POSSUM BARBECUE - John Martin

These numbers are now available to non-members of the Reprint Club at $1 each postpaid, minimum order $2.

SUMMER RECORD SPECIAL

Here's a hot weather special (and we don't know what it's like where you are, but it's stinkin' hot here!):

We have acquired a very limited supply (30 copies to be exact) of Stereoddities LP C-1900 GOLDEN REUNION IN RAGTIME, featuring performances by Eubie Blake, Joe Jordan and the late Charlie Thompson, hosted and narrated by "Ragtime Bob" Darch. While they last, this album is yours for $4 postpaid anywhere in the world. First come, first served!

"AN AWFUL LOT OF MUSIC IN DETROIT" (Conclusion)

by Lawrence W. Brown

It was ragtime that put Detroit at the top of the national musical scene. In the forty years since THE DETROIT SCHOTTISCH was published, no local piece had had more than local currency. But with the 1890's such jolly tunes as AT A GEORGIA CAMP MEETING began pouring from the presses of Whitney-Warner, Becher & Davis and other Detroit publishers. One of these old dance tunes, THE DANCE OF THE BROWNIES, was bought by Jerome M. Remick for ten dollars, and his investment set him on the way to becoming one of the largest publishers in the country. DANCE OF THE BROWNIES was written by Effie Kamman, a Detroit music teacher, who later became famous as a lady baritone. Ragtime remained a staple among Detroit publishers for almost twenty years, as many famous tunes came from the pens of local composers. Shelton Brooks, a Canadian who lived in Detroit, wrote SOME OF THESE DAYS and DARK TOWN STRUTTERS BALL. From a downtown saloon came BILL BAILEY and JUST BECAUSE SHE MADE THEM GOO-GOO EYES, both by Hughie Cannon. A ragtime piece which has reached a status similar to that held by THE DETROIT SCHOTTISCH is ALABAMA JUBILEE, which is one of the most popular square dance tunes. It was not written by Detroiters, but Remick published it in 1915.

The first "smash hit" song (to use an anachronistic but accurate term) to come out of Detroit was SWEET BUNCH OF DAISIES, by a Hoosier lady, Anita Owens, who either had a one-track mind, or knew a good thing when she had it. It took her fourteen years to do it again, but Mrs. Owens swept the country's parlors in 1908 with DAISIES WON'T TELL. In 1908 she promised that there was ONLY ONE DAISY LEFT, while she must have known at the time that the supply of daisies was limitless. Only a year later she found not just one more, but a whole chain of daisies. In 1913 she reversed herself (as if she hadn't already) with DAISIES WILL TELL YOU SO. But her final effort in 1914 bears tha heartening suggestion IF DAISIES WON'T TELL, ASK THE MAN IN THE MOON. Whitney-Warner published SWEET BUNCH OF DAISIES in 1894; Remick did the rest.

After the 'Nineties Detroit produced a major portion of the country's popular songs. BY THE LIGHT OF THE SILVERY MOON, CHINATOWN, MY CHINATOWN, IN THE SHADE OF THE OLD APPLE TREE, MY ISLE OF GOLDEN DREAMS, OH, YOU BEAUTIFUL DOLL, PUT ON YOUR OLD GREY BONNET, RAINBOW, SMILES, YOUR EYES HAVE TOLD ME SO, TOO-RA-LOO-RA-LOO-RA, THAT TUMBLE-DOWN SHACK IN ATHLONE, and THE SWEETHEART OF SIGMA CHI were all published in Detroit, and the last three are the work of Detroit writers. Two of the most prolific song writers were residents. Charles N. Daniels, the composer of CHLOE, spent many years in Detroit writing hit after hit, though most of his songs which are remembered were written after he left the city. Richard A. Whiting, on the other hand, wrote most of his best-known songs here. BREEZIN' ALONG WITH THE BREEZE, HORSES, HONEY, AIN'T WE GOT FUN, SLEEPY TIME GAL, SHE'S FUNNY THAT WAY, and JAPANESE SANDMAN appear to have a permanent place in American popular culture. Whiting's TILL WE MEET AGAIN is still popular after forty years, and its sales record has yet to be surpassed.

Detroit lost its musical eminence when it lost Remick thirty-five years ago. A few composers live and work here, Doris Fisher (PUT THE BLAME ON MAME) being the most notable. Music publishing has been continued by a few small firms, but there has been no hit published in Detroit since Remick.

We learned with deep regret that Russ Cassidy died in Denver on July 4th.

Just a few weeks ago, after he had announced the final issue of The Rag Time Review, Russ sent us some files of material in the hope that the Newsletter could make use of it. Included was a biography of Joe Lamb, written by Russ in 1961 and based on letters and visits between Joe and himself.

As a tribute to Russ, we are publishing this article in its entirety in this issue. We feel that it typifies both the sincere affection Russ held for ragtime, and the lasting contribution he made to the kind of music he loved so much.

JOSEPH F. LAMB: A Biography

by Russell E. Cassidy

On September 3, 1960, Joseph Francis Lamb, the last of the "Big Three" classic ragtime composers, died in his home in Brooklyn, New York, where he had lived for the past 49 years with his family. His contribution to the literature of classic ragtime was equalled or excelled only by the towering figures of Scott Joplin and James Scott, both acknowledged leaders in the field. Analysis of the literature of ragtime from 1897 to 1920 leads inevitably to the fact that the works of these three men, in quality and quantity, are outstanding amongst the work of any of the many gifted composers in the idiom. For this reason, the term "The Big Three" is indeed not inappropriate, and ragtime can claim its Bach, Beethoven and Brahms.* Joseph Lamb's career as a ragtime composer began in 1908 with the publication of his SENSATION, a number which had been selected from several manuscripts by Scott Joplin who endorsed it by allowing his own name to appear on the title page as arranger. Lamb composed rags until 1919 when ragtime's popularity was fading and being superceded by the new jass bands. About 1949 he began composing again though he was unaware of a beginning revival of interest in ragtime during the 40's. This later period is important because it demonstrates a continuation of development of an early ragtime composer's ideas, the later rags bearing little resemblance to SENSATION. The later rags also demonstrate eloquently that utilization of the syncopated idiom of ragtime need not produce a dated composition. Although a fickle popular taste once rejected ragtime, its potentialities have not been exhausted, and it is still a dynamic art form capable of further development. These newer rags do not "belong" to any period of musical Americana. Their quality and appeal is essentially timeless (as is true of all classics, ragtime or otherwise). They are capable of standing on their own musical merits without the crutch of nostalgia, or sentiment for bygone days.

*It should not be inferred that ragtime aspired to the profundity or emotional depth of the works of the great European masters, though Joplin wrote two folk operas and his EUPHONIC SOUNDS and MAGNETIC RAG have a serious caste.

The following account of Joseph Lamb's life may be considered as co-authored by Lamb himself, because wherever possible, it has been written in his own words taken from personal letters to the author and to Mr. Trebor Tichenor of St. Louis, as well as from personal conversation during weekend visits in the Lamb home. I am particularly grateful to Mrs. Lamb for permission to use this material as well as for supplying much additional information and for checking the final result for accuracy of the material not actually written by Joe himself. Despite the personal aspect of Lamb's letters, I have made every effort to use only that material which is relevant to the story and which best portrays Joe Lamb as a personality.

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Joseph Lamb was born December 6, 1887 in Montclair, New Jersey. His father was a building contractor who had married a girl from Ireland, and they lived in a middle-class neighborhood. Before the turn of the century, Montclair was a typical small eastern town with, as far as Joe remembered, no colored residents. As a result, Joe's early life was far removed from the origins of ragtime music: the midwestern area of America and Negro culture.

Neither of his parents were musically inclined, but he had an early aptitude for melody and harmony..."I never took lessons, and I can't explain how I happened to be able to write the rags I did. At about eight I started to fool around the piano, but didn't know one note from another--on the piano or on the music. I had two sisters who played classical music and they showed me what the different notes were and gave me a book that they used when they first started taking lessons. Instead of doing homework for school I studied that book. No more help. I used to put notes down on music paper and ask one of my sisters to play it, but it didn't mean anything. Later, after absorbing more of it, I got an idea of what the notes really meant. I sort of doped out something on the piano, and checking up on the notes in the book, wrote them on paper. No rests, measures, time or key. No half or quarter notes, just little round black notes. Then when I asked my sister to play it, you could have knocked me over with a feather when it sounded like what I had in mind. That did it, I guess. One of my sisters remarked to the other 'maybe Joe will write music some day.' Self taught? Definitely. The only help my sisters gave me was telling me what the notes were and giving me that book. From then on I was on my own. The talent was undoubtedly inborn and harmony came with it. My sisters didn't play ragtime and it was laughable later on to hear them try to interpret my rags when I wrote them down. They played the notes alright, but the tempo--wow! So far as ragtime was concerned, I had absolutely no background. It just appealed to me when I was able to understand it. The talent was there, for playing, for composing and for harmony and I simply had the sense to make use of them--thank the Lord."

Joe's father died when he was 12 years old. His mother wanted him to become a priest, although he had inclinations toward engineering. He was sent to St. Jerome's College at Berlin, Ontario (later changed to Kitchener during World WarI), about 70 miles from Toronto, in 1902 when he was 14 years old. That music was in his veins is obvious from his extra-curricular activity while at college. He contacted a music publisher, the Harry H. Sparks company in Toronto, who paid him five dollars for a waltz named after his sister, CELESTINE WALTZES. Another, FLORENTINE WALTZES, dedicated to a friend, Miss Lucy Fischer, was soon published. "Then they asked me to set poems to music. I wrote a couple dozen. I would read the poem over and get the rhythm of the words - maybe it was a ballad, a comical song, or a novelty. The music would always come - especially if the poem affected me."*

His academic studies apparently did not suffer because of his musical sideline during his two years at college, because he passed the entrance examinations for Stevens Institute of Technology where he planned to continue his technical education. The call to the preisthood had not been sufficiently strong. (Joe's early desire to become an engineer stemmed from an affinity to mathematics: 55 years later he advised, in a mildly admonishing letter to non-mathematically inclined Trebor Tichenor, "...I'm

afraid that regardless of which career you intend to follow, you're going to have to have plenty of math. I liked math and it was a good thing for my children that I did. I had algebra and trig at college...so you cram up on math! Math and syncopation, the only really important things in life.")

"I once wanted to be an Electrical or Mechanical engineer, but I didn't just switch to ragtime instead. I probably would have written rags even if I had become an engineer. While on my (summer) vacation preparatory to entering Stevens Institute, a neighbor in Montclair asked my mother if I wanted to go to work (I was 16). Well, for a kid that age that was something - a commuter to New York every day with the big shots. That seemed to overshadow being an engineer, and besides, no more school! The place where I went to work was a wholesale drygoods company, and I was an office boy, then a messenger, then something else. See how I was climbing? I started at $3.00 per week and in 10 months I was getting - you guessed it - $3.00 per week. After buying my commuter ticket and my lunch six days a week, I was - or at least my mother was - able to save enough for me to go to California to visit my brother who lived in San Francisco."

He stayed with his brother and got a job in a leather goods firm. The job was satisfactory except that he was occasionally asked to deliver large rolls of hides on the trolley car. At first he was refused by the conductor because of the size of the rolls, but he solved the problem by wrapping the rolls around himself and standing. A Saturday afternoon football game at Stanford that Joe particularly wanted to see conflicted with his employer's plans for him that afternoon. Nevertheless, he enjoyed the game and was apparently ready to leave California for home anyway. "...later I went back to Montclair. That was two weeks before the big earthquake in 1906. I was 18 then and had started writing some rags but making no attempt to sell them until a year or so later."

After his return to Montclair it wasn't long until he had an idea for another song. A childhood friend and neighbor, as Joe preferred to call her, "Addie" Bunton, was pleased that he was back from his travels. About that time the greeting "Hi Kid" was in vogue. It seemed to Joe that a term he and Addie used, "Gee Kid, But I Like You" was a good name for a song, so he wrote the music and lyrics to go with it, dedicating it to Miss Adaline S. Bunton. His next song (1909) was a collaboration. "...during the years I wrote ragtime I also wrote classic (?) ballads. Mary A. O'Reilly was a school chum of my mother back in Ireland when they were kids, but in the interim they went their separate ways, married and had families. They finally both wound up in Montclair and met by coincidence. Mrs. O'Reilly was a poetess, and when she found out I wrote music, she suggested writing a poem for me to set to music. She wrote LOVE IN ABSENCE and I had 500 copies printed for distribution among her friends by her and my mother. I had it published under the name of the Gordon Hurst Music Company (a nom de plume of mine). One of Mrs. O'Reilly's sons was a concert singer and he sang it several times."

As previously stated, Joe had been writing some rags, but making no attempt to sell them. In 1907 he took two rags to the John Stark music publishing office, but they were politely returned within a few days. He had been such a frequent customer at Stark's that a friendship had developed with Mr. and Mrs. Stark, and he often dropped in to shop and visit. He later said that he considered the Starks as personal friends rather than business acquaintances. It was during one of these shopping visits that an event transpired which was to alter the course of his career as a composer.

"There was a colored fellow sitting there with his foot bandaged up as if he had the gout, and a crutch beside him. I hardly noticed him. I told Mrs. Stark that I liked the Joplin rags best and wanted to get any I didn't have. The colored fellow spoke up and asked whether I had certain pieces which he named. I thanked him and bought several and was leaving when I said to Mrs. Stark that Joplin was one fellow I would certainly like to meet. 'Really,' said Mrs. Stark. 'Well, here's your man.' I shook hands with

*Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis: THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME, The Grove Press, 1959 revised, page 238.

him, needless to say. It was a thrill I've never forgotten. I had met Scott Joplin and was going home to tell the folks."*

After exchanging pleasantries, Joplin asked Joe if they could continue their conversation while walking homeward. He asked Joe to bring his rags to his home later that week and to play them. "...a lot of colored people were sitting around talking. I played my SENSATION first and they began to crowd around and watch me. When I finished, Joplin said, 'That's a good rag - a regular Negro rag.' That was what I wanted to hear. Then I played my two other numbers, DYNAMITE RAG and OLD HOME RAG. There is a place in the first strain of DYNAMITE where the bass and treble originally went upward together. At Joplin's suggestion I made the bass move downward in contrary motion to the treble. Joplin liked SENSATION best of my first three rags."** It was then that Joplin suggested placing his own well known name on the title page as arranger underneath Lamb's name as composer in order to help sell SENSATION, both to John Stark and to the public. It worked. A letter soon arrived from Stark with an offer of twenty-five dollars and the same amount to be paid after the first thousand copies were sold. Joe got the other twenty-five dollars in three or four weeks. Fifty-one years and some forty-six rags later, Joe recalled: "...this was one of my greatest thrills since I entered the ragtime domain. The first and foremost was the day I met Scott Joplin; the second, the day I first received published copies of SENSATION..." (Lamb's "SENSATION - A Rag" of 1908 is not to be confused with the 1918 SENSATION RAG credited to Eddie Edwards of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band.)

The heading at the top of the title page of SENSATION reads "Respectfully inscribed to Miss Nellie M. Butler," and the copyright date is 1908. Nellie Butler was another of Joe's childhood friends and neighbors in Montclair. It is to be presumed that the young Misses Bunton and Butler were delighted at having these musical efforts inscribed to them. Joe explained the switch in dedications..."One day I walked past Addie's house with Nellie and Addie saw us. She got mad and said she wouldn't talk to me any more if I didn't quit seeing Nellie."

In 1909, shortly after the publication of SENSATION, Joe took EXCELSIOR and ETHIOPIA in to Stark's office. EXCELSIOR was a difficult and "heavy" number with passages in full octave chords. To an average pianist it presents a rather formidable sight, being written in five flats with the trio in six flats, so Stark asked him to put it in an easier key. He changed it to G and C, but told Stark he felt that it lost something in the new keys and Stark agreed, so the original was kept. The picture on the cover page was suggested by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem of the same name, and showed a youth bearing a banner in an Alpine scene. Joplin's influence was prominent in ETHIOPIA where the first three themes, though syncopated, have a more flowing song - like melodic line in contrast to the rhythmic character of SENSATION and EXCELSIOR. The fourth theme contrasts with the first three in its rhythmic nature, and by this device generates a climax to the composition.

It was about this time that Joplin and Stark had a serious difference of opinion concerning the method of payment for rags...Joplin wanting royalties and Stark wanting outright purchase. It was also about this time that the only Joplin-Lamb collaboration was written. "Scott wrote the first two strains and I wrote the last two and, so far as I recall our talking about it, if someone were told that either one of us wrote the whole thing, no one would question it. If, as some people say, we both wrote pretty much alike, it was certainly evident in that rag...I do not remember the name of the piece we wrote together and I don't even remember how it went. I don't know if he (Joplin) was able to have someone else publish it, but I don't think he tried much because he was beginning to feel kind of low about his trouble with Stark. Stark liked it very much but he was as stubborn as Joplin about their differences and just wouldn't take it. When (Joplin's) wife Lottie died a couple of years ago, a friend of Joplin's, Eddie McTigue, got in touch with the lawyer who was taking care of her affairs. He offered to help the lawyer

*Blesh and Janis, op. cit., page 236.
**Blesh and Janis, op. cit., page 236.
This incident as told in Lamb's own words has been recorded on Folkways' record FG 3562, JOSEPH LAMB: A STUDY IN CLASSIC RAGTIME. (See discography this article)

straighten things out because there were a lot of Joplin's manuscripts in the house that might be disposed of to get more money into the estate. Eddie told him...that I was willing to pay for (the rag). The last time I spoke to Eddie he hadn't heard any more from the lawyer, so I guess I'll never hear any more about the rag." (Joplin collaborated with Arthur Marshall, Scott Hayden and Louis Chauvin on nine known rags. He is thought to have helped James Scott, and Lottie and others said that he wrote part of KING PORTER STOMP at the request of Jelly Roll Morton and Porter King around 1900.)

CHAMPAGNE RAG came out in 1910, sub-titled a March and Two Step. It was cast in the form of the earlier cake-walks, i.e. the statement of the first theme is repeated in the fourth, which is in the subdominant tonality of the trio. Lamb had the pleasure of hearing CHAMPAGNE played by a 250-piece concert band..."It was one of the most marvellous things I ever heard."

His next published rag was AMERICAN BEAUTY RAG which was copyrighted Dec. 27, 1913. This rag was thoroughly classic in concept, though in no sense a "heavy" rag. The first two themes were indicative of a gradual change in his style of composition toward longer phrasing, yet retaining the complex syncopation of previous rags. The phrasing of AMERICAN BEAUTY possessed a smoothness of flow which was not generally characteristic in the literature of ragtime with the exception of Joplin's work which Lamb admired so much. Despite the Joplin influence, this rag is uniquely Lamb's throughout. The cover page is sub-titled "A Rag of Class," and shows a stem of American Beauty roses.

In 1914, Joe recalled, a friend asked him to lunch. Upon passing his usual restaurant, he reminded his friend that there was plenty to be done at the office (WW I had begun) and that he shouldn't be gone long. His friend insisted on a restaurant several blocks away and Joe reluctantly agreed. Nearing the place, they heard a large military recruiting band playing martial music, and his friend would not be swayed from walking past the bandstand. As they approached the stand his friend waved to the bandleader who, upon previous arrangement, abruptly stopped the number they were playing and struck up with AMERICAN BEAUTY RAG. When the number was finished, both Joe and the band received a tremendous applause.

Nineteen fifteen saw the publication of four compositions: CLEOPATRA RAG, REINDEER RAG, RAGTIME NIGHTINGALE and CONTENTMENT RAG. CLEOPATRA and REINDEER were probably equal to most of the rags of 1915, but "...were written between classic rags." Lamb's pattern of composing then naming his rags was reversed with NIGHTINGALE. He had been impressed by Ethelbert Nevin's NIGHTINGALE SONG in an ETUDE magazine and "...James Scott had written a RAGTIME ORIOLE so I thought I would write a RAGTIME NIGHTINGALE. There was a part in it I liked and I used it as an introduction to the last theme. I didn't know what a nightingale sounded like, but I wanted something that sounded like a bird and I thought that would be all right."

The extremely beautiful harmonic construction of NIGHTINGALE is an excellent example of Lamb's natural, although academically untrained abilities as a composer. Questioned at length about this rag, he replied: "Re NIGHTINGALE and harmony, you are interested, you say, in getting an insight into the manner in which I compose. No dice. I can't tell you. I don't know myself.....it's definitely not academic - I never actually studied it. What I might have read about it had no reference whatever to how I handled it, so for the sake of harmony, I'll say it must be intuitive. The harmony I used, while sometimes intricate, always came out alright. I don't know the rules of harmony, but I do know it sounds alright."

Following a short discourse on passing tones and other aspects of NIGHTINGALE, Joe continues: "You'll find things of that nature in classical music. You say you don't find this particular thing in many other rags (major seventh intervals). That may be so. There are probably a number of phrases, chords and harmonies in my rags that are not in others'. That's what makes Lamb's rags typically 'Lamb'. You will notice (certain peculiarities) in Joplin's, Scott's and other's."

Although published in 1915, CONTENTMENT RAG was actually written about 1909 as its style of composition attests. During his visits with the Starks at their publishing office, Lamb had been impressed by their devotion to each other. He named one of his rags CONTENTMENT RAG in honor of them, and took it in as a fiftieth anniversary present, to the particular delight of Mrs. Stark. A cover design was drawn depicting an elderly couple sitting by their fireplace, but before it was published, Mrs. Stark became ill and the Starks returned to their home in St. Louis where she died in 1910. When CONTENTMENT appeared five years later, the cover picture showed a lone man seated, smoking his pipe.

In 1916, Stark published two more Lamb rags: PATRICIA RAG and THE TOPLINER RAG. These two numbers are fairly representative of the style of writing toward which Lamb was evolving. Both contain rather long, lilting arpeggio passages. This is especially true in the trio of PATRICIA where a two-bar phrase runs from the bass to the treble. TOPLINER probably shows James Scott's influence in the trio section. In both rags, Lamb has achieved the climax in the last theme by means of a more expansive use of the melodic line, rather than using predominantly rhythmic devices as in earlier rags.

Lamb's last published rag, BOHEMIA, appeared in 1919. He did not consider it a classic rag, because of its relatively simple, "light" melodic line which was not written in the flowing style he had evolved. However, BOHEMIA is marked by two innovations. In the second theme, Lamb seemed to have liked two ideas for part of the bass line, so the performer is given his choice of either part, ad lib, and between repeats of the trio, a 12-bar interlude is used with harmonic variations of the trio theme.

During the years from 1907 to about 1914, Lamb wrote several other rags and parts of rags which were not published. The list of titles reads as follows: DYNAMITE RAG, OLD HOME RAG - A Syncopated Characteristic, GREASED LIGHTNING, BEE HIVE RAG, THE JERSEY RAG, THE RAGTIME SPECIAL - A Slow Drag Two Step (Respectfully dedicated to my friend, Scott Joplin), RAPID TRANSIT - Slow Drag, TOAD STOOL RAG, ALABAMA - Characteristic Two Step, BLUE GRASS RAG, GOOD AND PLENTY RAG, HYACINTH - A Rag, SUNSET - A Ragtime Serenade, SYMPHONIC SYNCOPATIONS. "I would write one out and then another one would get into my head and I'd write that. I'd like that one better so I'd send it to Stark and the first one would lie dormant for awhile. It might be sent later, but the dormant ones sort of accumulated and that's how I had so many of them left. Take for instance, DYNAMITE and OLD HOME RAG. Those two were shown to Joplin at the same time as SENSATION. They are both marked 'Arranged by Scott Joplin.' When Joplin spoke to Stark about them, he probably suggested SENSATION to start with. In the meantime I was writing EXCELSIOR and ETHIOPIA which I liked better than the other two, so when Stark told me about the success of SENSATION I told him I had two others he could have for nothing. He said he didn't want to take them for nothing - if he liked them he would pay for them. Well, he did like them even though he said they were hard, especially EXCELSIOR - and since I refused to take anything for them, he took them anyway. My idea was to get them published. I didn't send the others (unpublished rags) to anyone because I wasn't satisfied with them, but now that I go over some of them occasionally, they don't seem so bad after all and I'm kind of sorry I didn't send them in."

When asked of the possibility of publishing his fourteen old rags, Lamb replied, "There are eight that could be used as they are, and two with only two strains each but which can't be joined together to make one complete rag - not compatible with each other. That's about all that could be used. You saw one called HYACINTH. I didn't think too much of it when I wrote it and neither did Stark when I sent it in, so I used the first strain and made it the first strain of PATRICIA. Part of the rest of it was a little too much like MAPLE LEAF's harmony. Stark sent it back calling my attention to the similarity. You know, playing so many of other people's rags, some parts of them may stick so much in your mind that you unconsciously incorporate them in your own. I always tried to avoid that although now that I go over them I do see some phrase or measure that sounds like someone elses' even though I can't locate the other fellow's (rag). I have also noticed in some of Joplin's and Scott's, written after some of mine, some little part sneaks in."

The intriguing possibility of an early syncopated predecessor to Lamb's rags may have been the result of an enthusiastic boyhood pretentiousness. When asked about a number entitled COONTOWN FROLICS - Two Step by J. Francis Lamb, 'One of Lamb's Famous Hits,' he replied, "I was looking for it today and so far can't locate it. It must be around someplace... I never threw any of my manuscripts out. Blesh says it bore the date of 1900 but it seems to me it was earlier than that.* I don't remember my dating any of my manuscripts. Besides, I don't think there was anything else besides that 'cover.' I don't remember writing such a piece, but I have a lot of stuff on paper from away back and it could have been one of them. I must have had a premonition then of later success, but I doubt very much if that piece would have created much of a furore either then or now.

Joe was married in June of 1911 to Miss Henrietta Schultz whom he had known most of his life, and they moved from Montclair to Brooklyn to be closer to Joe's work which at that time was in a dry goods commission house. After about five years there, Joe decided to try his hand in the song-plugging and arranging business with the J. Fred Helf music publishing company. "It was there that I got my first inkling that I really was good at harmony. I made all their piano arrangements 'because,' said Fred, 'my harmonies were different from others.' Later when he went bankrupt he wanted to get me in with another publisher, but I decided I didn't like the life - sometimes plugging the rathskellers and movie houses and cabarets until three in the morning. No soap! That was just - what shall I say? - a strange interlude in my career. I did that for a few weeks while I was with Helf because I thought it might help my musical career. It didn't because New York publishers didn't seem to have any particular interest in rags. Several rags were published in New York, but if you go over them you will notice that very few were of the type that you and I are interested in. Joplin had a few of them (published), but I don't recall others offhand. When Helf found out I could arrange he figured, I guess, that he would save money by having me arrange and not need a regular arranger. He took me off the plugging and gave me the arranging which I did at home nights instead of being up until three or four in the morning. That interlude might have helped my musical career in that it was a means of my getting several jobs of arranging (which I did at home) from other publishers and writers because (get this!) they liked my harmony. The arranging continued for a number of years... (Helf) didn't do anything with instrumental music, but I didn't care because I was already writing for Stark and was on the way to becoming one of the so-called leaders in the field, and one of the 'Big Three' in your language."

As for Lamb's own piano playing..."I could play my own rags and others' all right as well as other popular music and a few semi-classics, but I was no wiz. I could not be classed among the players in THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME, even though I was classed among those who wrote it. In those plugging jobs you must remember, we were plugging only the songs of Helf which, naturally, were played so many times that you played them in your sleep. While I could read music I could never memorize it, unless I played it 100 times or so. I couldn't play by ear unless I heard the piece incessantly. A violinist pal and I formed an orchestra with other musical friends. We called it the 'Clover Imperials,' and we played at church and lodge dances until I moved to Brooklyn (1911). My writing continued but my playing didn't."

While with the Helf company, Joe saw at firsthand the hectic and, at times, ruthless aspects of the music business and, satisfied that he had seen enough of the business as a profession, returned to the dry goods commission house. "In April of 1914 I answered an ad for an experienced custom house man capable of handling all phases of import work. I asked for twenty-five dollars per week and got it, and was thereby able to move into a better apartment in a better neighborhood. I was the only one in the place who knew anything about the import business and customs procedures. That business is called 'factoring.' They finance accounts of manufacturers and guarantee their sales and check their credits. I started in that place on April 19, 1914 and it was from the same place I retired in December, 1957."

With this more stable means of a livelihood plus his occasional arranging jobs in the evenings, Joe and his wife were able to settle down to the business of raising a family, and in July, 1915, a son, Joseph F. Lamb, Jr., was born.

*Blesh and Janis, op. cit., page 240

In 1916 during World War I, many of Joe's friends had been called to duty, and he felt uneasy about being left behind. His employer persuaded him not to enlist because of his age (29) and his family. Nevertheless, he did enlist in the Cavalry division of the New York State Home Guard in which he never actually mounted a horse.

Joe lost his wife to the flu epidemic which swept the country in 1920, leaving him with four-year-old Joe, Jr. Several years later, Joe was remarried, to Amelia Collins, the sister of a longtime friend.

With the decline of ragtime, the following years were spent in self-imposed obscurity and devotion to his family. The Lambs moved into their new home on East 21st Street in Brooklyn, and in February, 1924, their only daughter, Patricia, was born. Pat was not named for Lamb's 1916 rag, the title for which had been given by John Stark. The Lambs had three more sons: Richard in March, 1926; Robert in November, 1927, and Donald in July, 1930. Of these years, Mrs. Lamb wrote: "Joe's life...was very plain. He never cared for popularity, or let's say notoriety or money as long as people played and liked his music. At night after dinner he used to take the baby into the living room and with his foot rock the bassinet while he played the piano and put the baby to sleep. Later on he would sometimes bring home a batch of new music (professional copies), and after supper, all the children would sit in the living room and listen while Joe played them and we'd all pick which ones we liked best. Joe (continued to make) arrangements for publishers, but he never played in any bands after I married him. Joe and my brother Gus put on a number of (amateur) minstrel shows in our church, and wrote some songs for them, THE PURPLE MOON, HERE WE ARE and HERE WE ARE AGAIN were some of them. The names of (two of) the shows were THE BLACKBERRIES OF 1928 and THE BLACKBERRIES OF 1929. I always enjoyed Joe's playing, whether he was just playing or composing. When the children grew up and got married, Joe would play, and I would read or crochet and that's the way our evenings went."

In the early twenties, Lamb wrote another rag..."The last rag I sent to Stark, CHASING THE CHIPPIES, was bought by him but to my knowledge was never published. I considered it one of my best, but for the life of me I can't remember anything but the first two measures." Later in the twenties, Lamb wrote a series of instrumental numbers for Mills Music company. "All of those - there were 15 - were written after Stark was gone and at the request of Mills. He bought them all and they would have been published except that they were lost in moving. He was as anxious to have them (published) as I was. He wanted me to write them again. I couldn't even remember them. They weren't actually rags, but Mills termed 'Instrumental Novelties.'"

Around 1949, new melodies of rags began to flow in Lamb's mind despite the 30 years since his last published rag. Lamb had been out of contact with the music world, and was not aware of the revival of interest in ragtime during the '40s which had been sparked by Lu Waters and his pianist, Wally Rose, nor was he aware of the efforts of Brun Campbell and others to bring about a recognition of Joplin's genius. The melodies persisted, and Lamb began his second period of composition, fitting the pieces together and moulding them into the ragtime format.

It was shortly after this that Rudi Blesh's and Harriet Janis' refusal to accept a "Joplin Pseudonym" theory for Lamb's rags led them to the re-discovery of Joe Lamb during research for their definitive book, THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME. "He (Blesh) was trying to trace me around the localities where ragtime prevailed. He tried to locate me on the coast, in New Orleans and other southern points, in St. Louis, Chicago and even in New York. In checking in the copyright office in Washington, they happened to find two songs I wrote which had a Brooklyn address, so when they found me in the telephone book, they thought that rather than phone they better come around and find out. It was a good thing they did, because I would have been suspicious if someone had called and said he wanted to include me in a book on ragtime." Blesh could scarcely have been expected to look for a top ragtime composer in that quiet middle-class neighborhood near Coney Island, far from the ragtime capitals of the past. Lamb was amazed that anyone would still be interested in anything that had happened so long ago, and especially that they would be interested in him personally. Of this period, Mrs. Lamb wrote: "Joe played and composed all the

time, but didn't write things down. Some of his rags he had (composed) in 1949 before Rudi's book,but that really started him playing the piano and composing in earnest... and putting his compositions on tape."

Publication of THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME brought about a series of new friends interested in the subject during the following decade. On this Joe replied, "I enjoy getting letters from people I don't know because they are all interesting and are all different, and because they are all of a common interest and one that has gone pretty deep into my system. They all bring back very pleasant memories of 40-odd years ago when rags were rags and not swing, jazz or be-bop, although I like them all." Among these friends was jazz pianist and piano roll authority Mike Montgomery whose article, A VISIT WITH JOSEPH LAMB, appeared in the JAZZ REPORT.* Through Mike, Lamb's address was learned, resulting in a three-year correspondence by the author and Trebor Tichenor, during which Joe obligingly answered, in lengthy detail, multitudes of questions, and for good measure, many questions not asked!

Montgomery had brought out the fact that although many of Lamb's rags had been cut on piano rolls,*+ Lamb had never cut any himself, and, being out of touch with the music business, had never recorded any of his music. Several of his friends had urged him to consider recording, but a hearing impairment often distorted the sound from his piano and made practice discouraging. In 1958, while in search of material for a proposed Joplin record album, it was brought to the attention of Sam Charters of Folkways Record Company that the sole survivor of ragtime's "Big Three" might be somehow persuaded to make a documentary record, and that in fact, such a record ought to be done for its historical value. Lamb had already been convinced that recordings of his rags should be made, but in his characteristic modesty, was not convinced that he himself should be the pianist. The following account details some of the events which eventually led to the only recording known to be made by one of early ragtime's giants: ...(Dec. 1958) "Some day...I'll drop in on Charters. Maybe he can do something about an album of my rags whether I play them or not." (April '59) "I have been in touch with Mr. Asch of Folkways, who asked me to come in. I explained the trouble with my hearing, and that I was pretty much out of practice..." (July '59) "Sam and Ann Charters have been our guests a few times...Sam is anxious to record my rags and I hope that in spite of my hearing, I'll be able to go through with it. I should have kept up my playing all these years, but how could I ever anticipate anything like this? Ann played several rags, including ETHIOPIA, and it was the first time I ever heard it played by anyone else. I told them that maybe she should make the recording instead of me. Sam wouldn't have it because it has to be played by the composer. I may surprise everybody some day - if I do I'll be surprised myself." (Sept. '59) "Sam and Ann were here several times during our work on the record...in all, about 15 rags. The sessions lasted from about 3:00 to 9:00 pm with time out for supper. It was around 90 degrees all the time, and what with the heat, etc., I got so tired toward the end that I couldn't play anything right. The record, which he calls a documentary, will contain ten rags as well as a few questions and answers pertaining to the subject. ALASKAN RAG and COTTONTAIL RAG...were not yet put on paper when you were here and are maybe six or seven years old. The others are all Stark publications." (Feb. '60) "...the record is out. It is entitled JOSPEH LAMB: A STUDY IN CLASSIC RAGTIME."

By 1958, Lamb had composed and tape recorded five new rags, but had not committed them to manuscript despite persistent urging because "without a publisher like John Stark around, who would publish them?" For the same reason, the old rags, still in manuscript form, had not even been copyrighted. Several possibilities for publication had been suggested for consideration but none seemed promising. October of 1958 brought news that Robert R. Darch, ragtime performer, composer and historian, was also a publisher with his Ragtime Publishing House, and the author had the privilege of introducing Bob to Joe. The meeting proved mutually beneficial, for within months, a Darch number, OPERA HOUSE RAG, which had been sent to Joe for appraisal, was reurned marked 'Arranged by Joe Lamb' in the same manner as Joplin had done for Lamb. In addition, Darch had arranged to publish seven of Joe's rags. This provided the impetus for Joe to get the older rags

*Mike Montgomery, A Visit With JOSEPH LAMB; THE JAZZ REPORT, December, 1957.
+For information on piano rolls and recordings of Lamb's rags, see rollography and discography at the end of this article.

copyrighted and to start writing down the new rags. The numbers bought by Darch were GREASED LIGHTNING, RAPID TRANSIT, BEE HIVE, JERSEY RAG, DYNAMITE, THE RAGTIME SPECIAL and ALASKAN RAG. These were all old rags with the exception of ALASKAN RAG. Darch suggested re-naming them for geographical locations, but at Lamb's request the original titles were kept for sentimental reasons except for DYNAMITE which was re-named JOE LAMB'S OLD RAG. These seven rags were copyrighted in March, 1959, along with GOOD AND PLENTY, TOAD STOOL and OLD HOME RAG.

The persistence was paying off. Lamb now had nine of ten old rags and a new one copyrighted, and seven of these were slated for publication. This provided the spark of encouragement needed to finish transcribing the remaining new rags. During the following year or so, Lamb also composed another rag and worked on the completion of BLUE GRASS RAG. In March of 1960 he wrote, "I have been writing down a few of the new numbers and I am working on a new one now. Two that I composed some time ago are being perfected little by little and will be put down before long...BLUE GRASS, for which I had the first two strains nearly 50 years ago, has been completed and you might be interested to hear that Rudi Blesh is wild about the trio." The names and copyright dates of the new rags are: COTTONTAIL and BIRD BRAIN - November, 1959; and BLUE GRASS, RAGTIME BOBOLINK, FIREFLY RAG and THOROUGHBRED RAG - July, 1960. Another composition is in this series..."There is one - not actually a rag. It's not hard to play if you get the drift of it, but it was hard to put down. It's a little complicated." It is entitled HOT CINDERS and is dedicated to Joe's granddaughter Cindy.

Bob Darch's contagious enthusiasm for his stock in trade is to be credited with bringing Joe his first (and only) public appearance as a ragtime performer, as well as some measure of public acclaim and appreciation. In October of 1959, Darch was playing at the Club 76 in Toronto where he was billed as "Ragtime Bob Darch" playing and singing tunes of the past, interspersed with rags, done with his characteristic missionary zeal. Bob convinced the management and patrons that Joe should be brought to the Club 76 to appear as a guest star. The necessary arrangements were made, and Joe and Mrs. Lamb were flown to Toronto where they were met at the airport by Bob and members of the press, and for four days were given VIP treatment. "We were guests at a lunch in our honor at the Club 76...Honestly, I was definitely a big shot - hard to realize ... I'llnever get over it. Write-ups with pictures in the three papers.* Bob, two press representatives (from the Toronto STAR) and the two of us were taken all over Toronto to places where I hung out 50 or more years ago. Next day we were driven to Kitchener where I went to college...I was able to locate four of my classmates...we were televised by the Kitchener station and interviewed by the paper. We were going constantly from morning until bedtime every night. One of the points of interest was that the first music I ever published was published by Harry Sparks in Toronto...so that was where I had got my start."

"I entertained twice each night playing my own compositions. I was scheduled for three selections each performance, but had to play four. I must have signed autographs for 200 people. I was presented with a sterling silver tray with an inscription engraved on it to me from The Ragtime Music Lovers of Toronto, 7 October, '59 - Club 76."

Joe's widest publicity, perhaps, came from a most unexpected source. "...a fellow by the name of Whitney Balliet of THE NEW YORKER magazine, came to the house yesterday to get whatever information he could about me for an article for the magazine... He seemed to want my whole life's history in addition to my ragtime history. He was writing it all down shorthand in his notebook. After the 'interview' was over he asked me if I'd mind playing a couple of my rags for him. I didn't mind so I played AMERICAN BEAUTY and HOT CINDERS for him." Under the heading "The Ragtime Game," Mr. Balliet devoted most of two well written pages to a brief, but revealing picture of Joe and his accomplishments.**

At 72, Joe Lamb was still a vigorous man physically, seeming more like a man in his early forties. This was demonstrated one June afternoon when I was invited for 'a short walk' down to Sheepshead Bay, which ended as a hike to Coney Island, down the boardwalk

*Joe's trip was also covered by VARIETY magazine.
**THE NEW YORKER, July 2, 1960, pages 20, 21.

a ways amd back, a distance of three or four miles which Joe easily took in his stride. I (at less than half Joe's age) was frankly glad to get back and rest. Although Joe retired in December of 1957, he did not settle down to life in an easy chair, either physically or mentally. He had a keen interest in everything from local affairs to world events, and he was constantly busy with his family and grandchildren and various correspondence, having little time to sit back and contemplate how to spend his years of retirement (it was partly for this reason that writing down the newer rags was put off for so long).

Conversation was perhaps Joe's favorite pastime, reminiscing about ragtime or places he had been and people he had known. Although he actually was quite fond and proud of his compositions and proud of his position in the history of ragtime, he seldom spoke at length on these aspects, even when questioned, and details of his own part in ragtime almost had to be extracted one by one. During his interviews with Blesh for THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME, he recalled, he would have been extremely pleased just to be mentioned in passing with Joplin, and almost couldn't conceive himself being ranked in the same class. In a letter about tapes of his rags he wrote: "I like to hear my music played by someone else because I have had the experience so seldom, and certainly not because I am conceited. I'm certainly not and I don't think I have a reason to be...(Joplin) definitely was not conceited but he had a reason to be."

Lamb's approach to composition was simple and straightforward: "...my rags are not intentionally difficult. I wrote them down the way I composed them and that's the way they came to me. The same thing applies to the keys they were written in. Somehow they seem more solid, if you know what I mean. If they (ideas) impress me I try to keep them in my head until I can put together a whole rag. Incidentally, when something comes to me, the harmony comes with it. I think EXCELSIOR was my most difficult rag, and so did Mr. Stark who called it a 'heavy weight' because of its chords and because it was written in five and six flats - but that's the way it came to me. The part of the last theme of EXCELSIOR which is my choice is the 5th to 8th bars, particularly the 5th and 6th. I can recall how I worked on those two bars to get the construction and harmony I was looking for. Some of my other rags have such phrases (i.e., which required special attention). Take AMERICAN BEAUTY for instance, the first three measures of the first strain - particularly the second measure. In TOPLINER, the introduction to the trio. (In this case)...the whole piece was in my head minus that introduction, and when I sat down to write out the manuscript I hesitated before I wrote the trio. It needed an introduction and I fooled around until I got what seemed to satisfy me."

ETHIOPIA RAG (first theme, 8th measure) contains a short contrapuntal phrase which punctuates the first eight-bar statement. (At first glance this bar appears to be written for three hands.) In reference to this, Joe wrote: "...when I was writing the rag, nothing particular about any one measure impressed me at the time, but upon completion and playing it over, certain things struck me as unusual. That measure did, but only in the sense that one playing it would suddenly come upon it...and experience a little difficulty as compared to preceeding measures. My thought was simply that. (After) I wrote it I sort of liked it for that reason. The measure could have been much simpler, but why spoil it?"

"I always had more trouble naming my rags than writing them. Some of those Stark published didn't have my names on them - he changed them. NIGHTINGALE, AMERICAN BEAUTY, EXCELSIOR and ETHIOPIA were mine, but TOP LINER, PATRICIA, BOHEMIA and CLEOPATRA werenot."

"Your friend who said 'Lamb never showed any mercy' may have something when it comes to one or two of mine, but...I have seen several rags much more difficult than any of mine. Don't play them (anybody's) too fast - it spoils them. In one of Stark's circulars he says: 'slow march time, or about 100 quarter notes to the minute is about right.' This <u>does</u> seem to be about the proper tempo to play a rag to get the proper effect. 'Slow March Tempo' is a relative term, nothing definite, and could be either faster or slower than 100 quarter notes to the minute."

"I did (and do now, occasionally) play several rags of other composers - for my own amusement only - and my favorite of all of them was (and is) GLADIOLUS by Joplin. Another favorite is GRACE AND BEAUTY by James Scott, also HILARITY and FROG LEGS. MAPLE LEAF, of course, SEARCHLIGHT, FIG LEAF and RAGTIME DANCE, all by Joplin. I particularly liked HAM AND by Marshall, APPLE JACK by Johnson and PEACHES AND CREAM by Wenrich. Those were my favorites but I liked several others." (There is a striking similarity in Lamb's style, partcularly after AMERICAN BEAUTY, to the trio section of his favorite Joplin rag, GLADIOLUS.)

Though Lamb never met any of the other great rag composers except Joplin, he always felt as though he knew them personally through their mutual pursuit. Commenting in the difficulty of playing James Scott's rags, he said: "...(one of the) reasons why Scott's rags are hard to play is because of his almost constant trips to the upper registers which make them hard to read readily. I try to keep mine 'down among the sugar cane.'" Despite a sometimes lack of variety in Scott's rags, ..."he wrote quite a few really good rags that were individual and not too much like any of his others. But, tell me, do I lack variety?"

Classic ragtime as contrasted to jazz is a composed music, written for the piano in which the composers carefully moulded, usually, four themes which required a continuity in terms of the whole composition, i.e., the themes must be compatible with each other. There was often the written admonition: N.B. Do not play this piece fast - it is never right to play ragtime fast - Composer. Lamb was not dogmatic about all this, but he was strictly to-be-played-as-written pianist, and he sometimes put the sheet music, even of his own numbers, on the music rack when playing for visitors to be sure of playing correctly. Improvisation in playing classic ragtime was clearly not in his makeup. It is generally recognized that at the opposite pole, playing as-written from a printed score is contrary to the artistic nature of jazz pianists. This divergence of viewpoints (which should be considered when listening to ragtime performances on records or elsewhere) produced some interesting commentary from Lamb when he heard records of rags. For instance, Johnny Wittwer, who plays CONTENTMENT RAG (mistitled CANNED MEAT at time of recording), RAGTIME NIGHTINGALE and CLEOPATRA RAG, is a fine jazz pianist, though he likes ragtime and can play it well. On Stinson 58, Wittwer kept essentially to the score of CONTENTMENT except in the rhythmic last theme where he felt the need to improvise. Joe commented: "That was CONTENTMENT alright, except that I wouldn't swear about the last part...he undoubtedly played it from memory and maybe he forgot the last part and made it up himself. Also, I think that he takes too many liberties with RAGTIME NIGHTINGALE (on JazzMan 20). Of course, a composer likes to hear his compositions played pretty much the way they were written - for instance Wally Rose's rendition of TOP LINER (GTJ EP 1013). He definitely knows how to interpret rags. I haven't heard anyone - on records or otherwise play any of my rags as well as he plays TOP LINER. (Joplin's) CASCADES by Ralph Sutton (on Down Home MGD-4) was too fast...but it was very good - well played. I think LILY RAG (played by composer Chas. Thompson on American Music 527) was swell. It's the first time I ever heard it, and you can tell Charlie I don't think they come any better." Joe was even less familiar with jazz band renditions of ragtime than pianistic improvisations: "I have a record of SENSATION played by Mutt Carey and his New Yorkers called Joplin's SENSATION. It's on Century 4007, and between you and me it's lousy."

Many know of Johnny Maddox's popular records of tunes played in ragtime style, but few, including Joe, were aware that he once made a record of classic rags (which was therefore not commercially successful), or that he is a serious student and collector of ragtime sheet music and piano rolls, and can play ragtime correctly to a properly receptive audience. Never having had this opportunity, Joe wrote: "Bob Koester at Seymour's has my record and has sold one to Johnny Maddox. Maybe after he hears my record he will slow down his playing a little, as well as stick to the music score."

Lamb was to have been a guest in October, 1960, at the second annual Scott Joplin Memorial Concert in Sedalia, Mo., where he would have met another venerable composer, Arthur Marshall,80, as well as Tom Ireland, 95(?), both of whom also knew Joplin. (Sedalia, erstwhile home of the Maple Leaf Club, is awakening to its importance in the

history of ragtime, and in addition to the annual memorial concerts, a seven-foot monument is in process of being erected in honor of Joplin at the former site of the Maple Leaf Club at Main and Lamine Streets, Sedalia.) In addition to being present at the Sedalia affair, "...a fellow from NBC paid us a visit to gather data about me for a TV program in October. He had, besides me, a list of...other ragtime composers such as Joplin, Scott, Jelly Roll Morton, etc., on whom to collect similar information. (He wanted) pictures of the places I used to play in, or posters covering such events. I told him I had none, that I wasn't in the same category as the rest of my contemporaries, and that my locale, at the time, didn't even know what it was all about. It is possible that the principals might be invited to the preview in New York."

At the suggestion of Bob Darch, and under the sponsorship of Burl Ives, Lamb submitted copies of several of his rags for admission to membership in ASCAP. His membership was approved, although notification was not received until after his death. On the day he died (of a heart attack), Lamb, the last of the Big Three ragtime composers, was reviewing a rag for one who, it may be hoped, will be a continuation of composition in the classic ragtime style: Fred Hoeptner, a young engineer in Los Angeles whose new rag SEDALIA - Respectfully dedicated to the late Joseph F. Lamb - is certainly written in the classic tradition.

Throughout this story of Lamb's life, a definite pattern of the man and his music emerges. That he was a "natural born" composer is obvious and undeniable in view of his lack of academic musical training. Ragtime appealed to him, and when he had comprehended the idiom he wanted to compose rags of quality after the manner of Joplin. Music was a means of personal expression to Lamb, and he undoubtedly could have made a career of composing and arranging. He rejected that course to be able to keep his musical expression free from compromise as might have been necessary had he been subject to the commercial demands of the music business. Admittedly he wanted to see his compositions in print and available to the public, a not uncommon instinct (he gave ETHIOPIA and EXCELSIOR to Stark), but he must have been confident of their musical worth - a confidence which has been vindicated by time. His difficult rags might have been simplified or put into easier keys, and doing so undoubtedly would have increased their sales, but to have done so would have been to compromise his musical integrity. Not bound by the demands of commerce in his art, this was not necessary. (Credit must also be given to John Stark in this respect for recognizing and insisting upon quality in his company's publications, and thus providing an outlet for the high quality, sometimes uncommercial works of men like Joplin, Scott, Lamb, et al.) After his works were in print, he did not aspire to the public eye, preferring to remain on the sidelines rather than work the nightclub and cabaret circuits.

Lamb's compositions are a reflection of a happy and contented life. His works are essentially extrovertive and joyous as compared to Joplin's (later) rags. He composed simply for the satisfaction of his creative urge; his rags were an end unto themselves. Lamb was not concerned with establishing an art form, nor was he concerned with public acceptance of or establishing respectability for that art form. These aspects were of paramount concern to Joplin who was attempting to establish a position among the arts for the Negro race. Lamb's sense of musical values required that his compositions must meet or excel his own criteria of excellence. Composing to such standards necessarily limits quantity. Only as an avocation could he achieve his ambition of "composing rags like Scott Joplin's." Few men have fulfilled their ambition as successfully as Joseph Lamb.

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(This article has been written with the purpose of documenting, as accurately and completely as possible, material on Lamb's life which would have otherwise remained in private letters. My intent has been to evoke a picture of Lamb as a personality and a major contributor to the literature of ragtime. I am indebted to Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis for permission to quote from the book, THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME. R.E.C.)

JOE LAMB DISCOGRAPHY (as of 1961)

SENSATION
Century 4007, Played by Mutt Carey and his New Yorkers (band).

EXCELSIOR
Circle 5004, (from U.S. Music piano roll #62255B).

AMERICAN BEAUTY
Riverside Records S D P 11, RLP-12-112 (12 in. LP).
Riverside Records RLP 1006 (10 in. LP).

RAGTIME NIGHTINGALE
Jazz Man 20, Played by Johnny Wittwer (piano solo); (10 in. 78 rpm).

CONTENTMENT RAG
Stinson SLP 58, Played by Johnny Wittwer (piano solo) Note: mis-titled CANNED MEAT RAG (10 in. LP).

TOP LINER RAG
Good Time Jazz GTJ EP 1013, Played by Wally Rose (piano solo); (45 rpm).
Good Time Jazz GTJ M 12034, Played by Wally Rose (piano solo); (12 in. LP monaural, also available in stereo).
Dot Records DLP - 3321 "The World's Greatest Piano Rolls" (from a nickelodeon roll).

JOSEPH LAMB: A STUDY IN CLASSIC RAGTIME
Folkways FG 3562, Played by Joe Lamb (piano solos and reminiscences); (12 in. LP).
Includes: COTTONTAIL RAG, EXCELSIOR, CLEOPATRA, SENSATION, TOP LINER RAG, ALASKAN RAG, RAGTIME NIGHTINGALE, AMERICAN BEAUTY, CONTENTMENT RAG, PATRICIA RAG.

JOE LAMB ROLLOGRAPHY

AMERICAN BEAUTY : AN 91255, AR 1878 pl by E. Stevens, MET 104054, MET 300874, QRS 100299 pl by Max Kortlander, UN 100595, UN 300875, USM 6312, USM 7065 in medley.

BOHEMIA RAG: On Columbia nickelodeon roll, COL--

CHAMPAGNE RAG: USM 4523, USM 64523B

CLEOPATRA RAG: On nickelodeon roll medley ST A1273

CONTENTMENT RAG: AR 2815 pl by S. Williams, USM 7050B, SE 1627

EXCELSIOR RAG: USM 2255, USM 62255B

RAGTIME NIGHTINGALE: AR 3855 pl by S. Williams, MEL 303003, MET 302002, On nickelodeon roll ST A1273, UN 302003, USM 7373

REINDEER RAG: USM 7272, in medley USM 7345

SENSATION: CON 1303, QRS 30845, QRS 03302 (mis-credited as Scott Joplin's Rag Medley)

TOP LINER RAG: AR pl by H. Lutter, MA 202626 pl by Felix Arndt, USM 7671, USM 8007 in medley.

AN Angelus; AR Artempo; COL Columbia; CON Connorized; MA Metro Art; MEL Mel-O-Dee; MET Metrostyle; QRS QRS; SE Sextrola; ST Standard; USM U.S. Music; UN Universal; KB Kibbey